



NATIONAL
ARCHIVES

National Personnel
Records Center

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

NPRC Pandemic Impact and Recovery Plan

March 2, 2022



Operating Status and Priorities

Operating Status: No building occupancy limitation beginning February 28th. **All on-site staff directed to report March 7th.**

On-site Staffing: Three on-site shifts at Archives Drive, alternate location (Charles F Prevedel Building), plus overtime periods on Saturdays and Sundays and some holidays

Servicing all requests with the following priorities:

- Emergency Correspondence
 - Burials
 - Medical emergencies
 - Homeless veterans
 - Comparable emergencies
- VA Loan and Transfer Requests
- Remote work of all types
- Congressional requests
- Routine requests for separation documents (DD Forms 214)
- Working with VA on large scale digitization of NPRC holdings and electronic records sharing program



National Personnel Records Center

Holdings: Over 4 million cubic feet of military and civilian personnel, medical and related records in textual and micrographic formats in two separate facilities in the St. Louis metropolitan area

Staffing: 661 total staff (pre-pandemic) across all programs at the Military Personnel Records facility

Production: Respond to > 1.5 million requests per year (Correspondence and Loan & Transfers)

Performance Goals:

- Respond to 95% of Loan & Transfer Requests in \leq five days (99% prior to pandemic)
- Respond to 90% of Separation Document Requests in \leq ten days (94% prior to pandemic)
- Respond to 90% of FOIA requests in \leq twenty days (99% prior to pandemic)

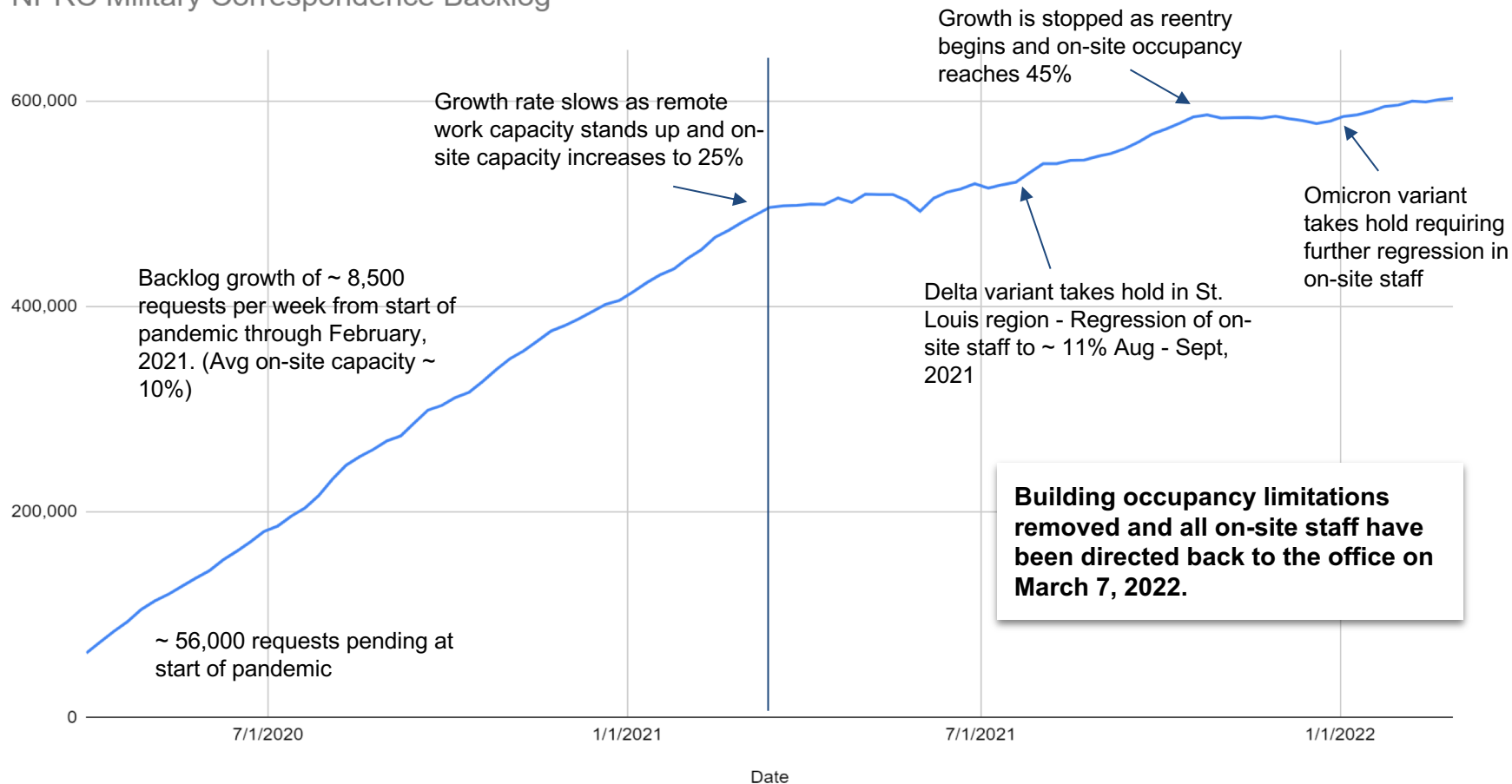


Pandemic Impacts

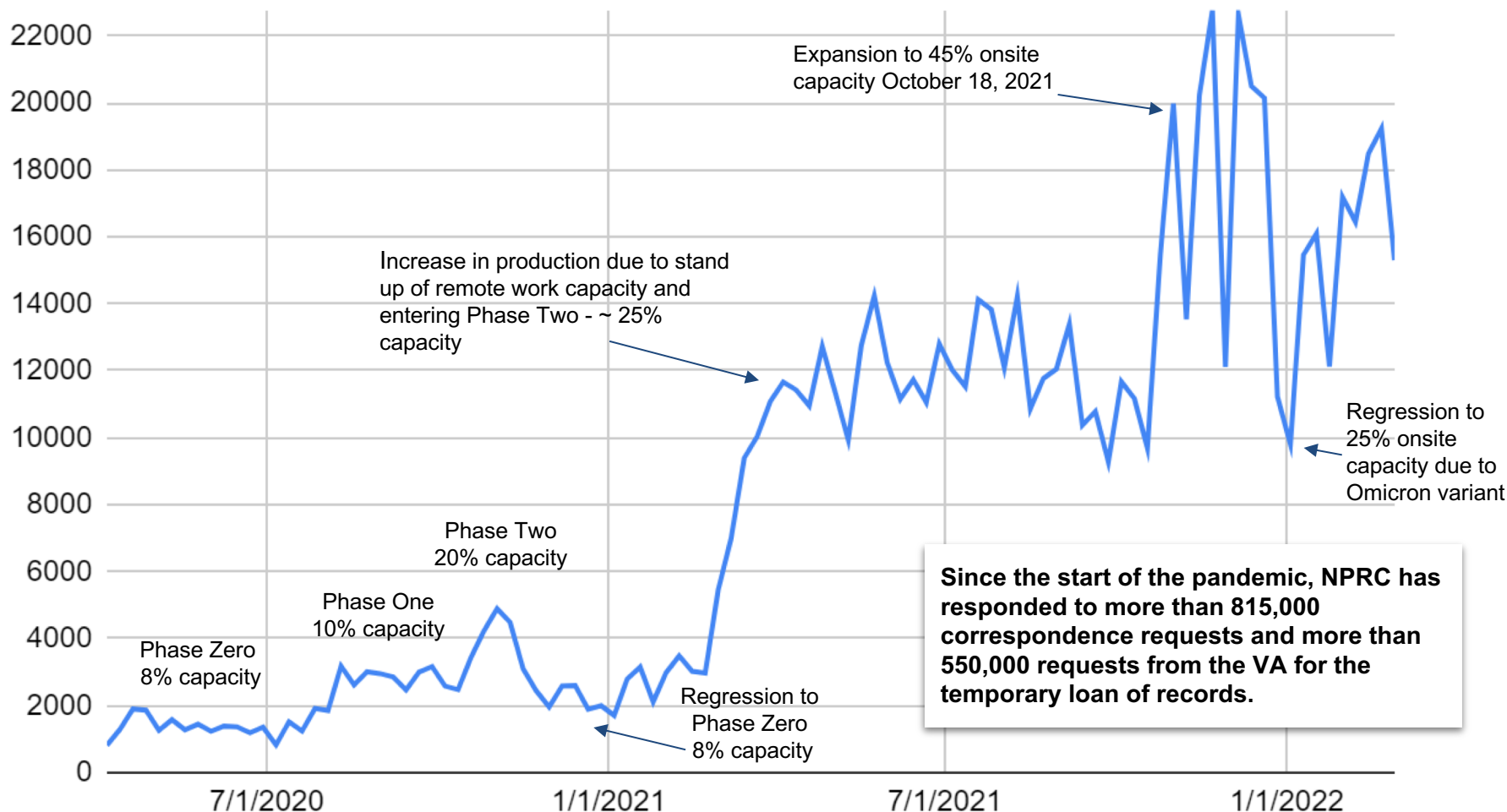
- Backlog has grown from 56,000 to approximately 600,000 since March, 2020
- Weekly production has increased from fewer than 2,000 requests per week at start of pandemic to ~ 17,000 requests per week today. Will exceed pre-pandemic level after staff return on March 7th.
- Remote production has grown from zero at start of pandemic to ~ 5,000 requests per week today.
- Despite mask requirements, social distancing, mandatory vaccination, and strict occupancy limitations, we have had 153 on-site exposures or potential exposures which disrupted operations and required deep cleaning of the facility, contact tracing, and the quarantine of staff.
- During the period December, 2021 thru January, 2022 we had 61 on-site exposures due to Omicron variant.
- We have had one employee death and numerous staff who have lost family members due to Covid-19.

Military Correspondence Backlog

NPRC Military Correspondence Backlog



Weekly Correspondence Production





Completed Recovery Actions

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Built and deployed secure digital delivery functionality• Partnered with the VA to detail staff from St. Louis VA Regional Office to NPRC to support VA business demands• Upgraded eVetRecs to allow for digital signatures, electronic status checks, and submission of emergency requests• As vaccines became available, designated NPRC staff as Critical Infrastructure and provided vaccine opportunities through Veterans Health Administration• Deployed softphone solution to stand up remote Call Center - responding to over 4,500 calls per week | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnered with VA to digitize raw mail to facilitate remote entering of requests into NPRC production system - All backlogged mail has been digitized and entered into production system• Stood up an alternate site using available space at the St. Louis VA Regional Office• Developed digitization strategy - initially in-house/on-site; later transitioned to leverage VA resources<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ VA Adjudication (in place prior to pandemic)○ NPRC Correspondence (September, 2021)○ Pro-Active Pulls (September, 2021)○ Currently digitizing ~ 21,000 records per week | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Request for Assistance from DoD - led to advanced funding to support the hiring of additional contractors• Increased contract labor investment from 30 FTE prior to pandemic to 130 today• Built and deployed in-stack scanning functionality• Stood up second and third shifts at NPRC's main facility - currently operating from 6:00 am - 3:00 am• Operating overtime shifts on most Saturdays and Sundays and on some Federal holidays• Collaborated with CDC experts to implement strategies to safely maximize on-site occupancy at NPRC's main facility |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Ongoing Recovery Actions

- Purchased and deployed laptops and peripherals to support remote work. Hardware to support ~ 450 staff has been deployed - aggregate weekly production has increased from ~ 2,500 per week at start to pandemic ~ 17,000 per week today; remote work is ~ 5,000 per week
- Issued Task Order to develop functionality to ingest digitized records from VA into NPRC's Production System and integrate them into NPRC workflow. First phase development targeted for May, 2022.
- Reconfiguring office space to support expansion of staff, extraction/digitization of records, and post-Covid return to workplace
- New Hires (Funding in place to hire 150+ new staff members; recruiting actions are in process and new hires have begun on-boarding)
- Communicating frequently with stakeholders - (Recurring updates to Committee Chairs and Members of Congress; Veterans Service Organizations; multiple congressional staff briefings [casework workshop ~ 245 attendees, Department of the Army and Navy Congressional Staff Casework Orientation ~ 200 attendees]; daily meetings with VA Regional Office staff; weekly meetings with VA Business Integration staff; recurring meetings with National Cemetery Scheduling Office)
- Gradual reopening of limited on-site research capacity beginning January 25, 2022.
- Post-pandemic operations with full return to on-site work to begin March 7, 2022.



High Level Outcomes and Forecast

- Over 1.3 million requests serviced since the start of the pandemic - over 700,000 public requests and over 500,000 requests from the Veterans Benefits Administration
- Service to the Veterans Benefits Administration currently exceeds its pre-pandemic level
- Call Center Services have been restored to pre-pandemic level
- Backlog reduction to resume with transition to post-pandemic operations on March 7, 2022
- Backlog of requests for separation documents, FOIAs, and congressional requests to be eliminated by end of current fiscal year.



NATIONAL
ARCHIVES

National Personnel
Records Center

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

Appendix - Summary of Changes in Operating Status Throughout Pandemic

Changes in On-Site Operating Status

Dates	Duration	Operating Status - On-Site Occupancy Limitation
March 23 - June 21, 2020	13 weeks	Phase Zero - Emergencies Only - ~ 8% of normal on-site staffing
June 22 - October 4, 2020	15 weeks	Phase One - Occupancy at 10%
October 5 - November 8, 2020	5 weeks	Phase Two - Occupancy at 20%
November 9, 2020 - March 7, 2021	17 weeks	Regression to Phase Zero - Emergencies Only - ~ 8% of normal on-site staffing
March 8, 2021 - March 28, 2021	3 weeks	Phase One - Occupancy at 20%
March 29, 2021 - July 25, 2021	17 weeks	Phase Two - Occupancy at 25%
July 26, 2021 - Aug 1, 2021	1 week	Phase One - Occupancy at 20%
Aug 2 - September 26, 2021	8 weeks	Phase Zero - Emergencies Only - ~ 11% occupancy

- During 95 weeks of pandemic NPRC never shut down. Since the earliest days, we always maintained onsite staff to respond to emergency reference requests (burials, medical emergencies, and homeless veterans) with staff schedules modeled after military watch schedules.
- The zip code in which the Center is located and the surrounding areas in which the majority of our workforce reside were consistently among the hardest hit areas in the region.
- During the 17 weeks of regression between 11/8/20 - 3/7/21 the new case counts and test positivity rates were among the highest of all nationwide areas monitored by NARA.
- On June 22, 2021 NARA issued a notice directing the NPRC workforce back to the office and establishing a re-entry date of July 19th. Unfortunately, as that date approached the Delta variant took hold in the St. Louis area, requiring NPRC to pause the planned recall of staff and later to regress its reopening.

Changes in On-Site Operating Status

Dates	Duration	Operating Status - On-Site Occupancy Limitation
Sept 27 - October 17, 2021	3 weeks	High Transmission, but increase to 25% onsite capacity
October 18, 2021 - January 4, 2022	11-½ weeks	High Transmission, but increase to 45% onsite capacity
January 5, 2022 - February 27, 2022	7-½ weeks	High Transmission, but emergency regression to 25% onsite capacity due to significant increase in on-site exposures associated with Omicron variant
February 28, 2022 - March 6, 2022	1 week	Substantial Transmission - Occupancy limitation removed
March 7, 2022		On-site staff directed back to office for post-pandemic operations

- Despite local community health measures commensurate with CDC's definition of areas of "High" transmission, NPRC increased concurrent on-site occupancy to 25% beginning on September 27th and scaled up to 45% beginning on October 18th (after two incubation periods).
- Transmission of Omicron variant led to significant increases in on-site exposures late December thru January.
- Reached out to CDC - agreed regression to 25% was a reasonable response to increase in transmission.
- Health conditions in St. Louis area improved to "substantial" - occupancy limitation lifted February 28, 2022 and on-site staff directed back to office beginning March 7, 2022